

The Kentucky Oral History Commission

# Women in Politics and Government

## Oral History Interview Collecting Initiative

### FIELD GUIDE



# 100 YEARS OF INFLUENCE



Dear reader,

It's difficult to imagine, while in the voting booth, that it's only been a few generations ago that women fought for and were guaranteed their right to vote in the United States. My grandmother was 25 years old when she was granted the right to vote in the 1920. As a young girl, I remember her teaching me the importance of voting and "having a say" in the political process. She told me I should never take the right to vote for granted. Because of her, I haven't. When I encounter long lines at the polling district, I remember my grandmother and all those who came before her.

In these intervening hundred years since the ratification of the 19th amendment, and even before, women have participated in the political process, held office, and joined public service. It is fitting to honor their dedication, and commemorate this anniversary, by recording their historically significant memories for future generations. This field guide, produced by the Kentucky Oral History Commission of the Kentucky Historical Society, provides a basic overview of conducting and archiving oral histories with Kentucky women who have had an impact in government and politics nationally, state-wide, and locally.

These interviews will be an invaluable primary source for future researchers and will further the Kentucky Historical Society's mission of helping people understand, cherish, and share Kentucky's stories. We hope to receive interviews from outstanding women representing diverse backgrounds from every corner of the Commonwealth. It is only possible to interpret the history of Kentucky women's influence through your help and hard work documenting their fascinating lives.

Sincerely,

*Regina Stivers*

Regina Stivers  
Deputy Secretary  
Tourism, Arts and Heritage Cabinet



On Jan. 6, 1920, Gov. E.P. Morrow signed the 19th Amendment to the United States Constitution amid a crowd of suffragists. Kentucky was the 24th state, of the 36 required, to ratify the amendment, which made women's right to vote legal in the United States.

# WHO HAS A STORY TO TELL?

Although the 19th amendment gave United States women the right to vote, their contributions within government and politics are broader than suffrage. This is certainly true of women in Kentucky. Names like Georgia Davis Powers, Martha Layne Collins, and Mae Street Kidd evoke pride in the democratic process and remind us of Kentucky political milestones.

Do you know a woman with a noteworthy career in government or one who volunteered many hours to advocate for a cause? We encourage you to record her story for researchers and for the inspiration of future leaders. Memories from civil servants, elected officials, campaign workers, legislative aides, strategists, club and association members, journalists, poll workers, lobbyists, and more, are all important in understanding the contributions of women to the Commonwealth and the full picture of Kentucky’s political history.

The following guide will take you through the oral history interview process, from using equipment to storing the audio files safely, so you can take an active role in collecting history.

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Created in 1888, Kentucky Equal Rights Association was the first statewide women's suffrage organization in the South. It focused on reforming legal and educational rights for women as well as voting rights. In 1920, the members voted to renew the organization and become the Kentucky League of Women Voters.

# BEFORE YOU BEGIN

## ARCHIVAL PLAN

Oral history interviews require specific care to ensure their preservation and accessibility to researchers. The best permanent home for interviews is one that accepts archival materials, has the ability to care for digital files, employs trained personnel, makes materials available to the public, and has a scope or mission that complements the interview topic.

Although archiving your interview will be your final step, knowing in advance where your interview will live permanently is helpful in making other preliminary decisions. For example, if you'd like your interview to go to a formal repository, such as a university library, that institution may prefer specific media formats or require that you use their legal release agreement.

Institutions that may accept oral histories include public libraries, local historical societies, historic house museums, genealogy societies, historic sites, and university programs. Contact repositories about their willingness to accept your interview before proceeding.

You may keep a home or personal archive, but the commitment will be the same. Interviews should be stored redundantly on a combination of hard drives, servers, or cloud storage. All interviews should be accompanied by legal release agreements, even those recorded with friends and family.

For this initiative, you may choose any repository to care for your interview; however, the Kentucky Oral History Commission recognizes and recommends five accredited repositories: The Kentucky Historical Society, Louie B. Nunn Center at the University of Kentucky, William H. Berge Oral History Center at Eastern Kentucky University, Oral History Center at University of Louisville, Berea College Special Collections and Archives, and Western Kentucky University Manuscripts and Folklife Archives.

The final section of this guide provides more information about submitting interviews to the Kentucky Historical Society.

## LEGAL RELEASE AGREEMENT

Whether it's called a release form, deed of gift, consent, or waiver, interviewers and narrators should sign a legal release agreement at the conclusion of an interview. Oral history interviews are intellectual property and subject to copyright law. A release assigns the copyright holder, and may also include details about how the interview will be used and allows the narrator to note any desired restrictions. Without a legal release agreement, it is difficult to make an interview available to researchers or any other public use. Even if you're just interviewing a family member for your personal archive, obtain a release. Most repositories have their own form you can use. You can also create your own form. Give the legal release form to the narrator in advance, so they may review it and ask questions. Bring two copies to sign in duplicate at the interview.



# EQUIPMENT

## Audio

In less than 150 years, recorded sound has been captured on wax cylinders, wax discs, magnetic tape, compact discs and more. Because we cannot predict how changes in audio technology will affect the way we capture sound, nor can we anticipate how future archivists and researchers will use our recordings, it's important to record at the highest quality currently available.

Fortunately there are many options, including solid state digital recorders and laptops with audio recording software using USB microphones. Your equipment, regardless of brand, style, or price, should record an uncompressed WAV (.wav) format, PCM 24bit, sampled at 96kHz using an external microphone. Avoid equipment intended for dictation and classroom notetaking, as these often record only in the condensed MP3 format and have no input for an external microphone. A smartphone *can* record an interview, but the context of an oral history currently requires more than most smartphones may offer (i.e., memory and microphone quality). Practice using your equipment, and become comfortable with it before your interview.



In 1978, the Kentucky Commission on Women (KCW) initiated a campaign to bring attention to the outstanding women who made significant contributions to Kentucky's history, but had been omitted from historic accounts. "Kentucky Women Excel" began as an exhibit at the 1978 Kentucky State Fair, and included watercolor portraits of six diverse women who worked in non-traditional ways during the eras in which they lived.

## Video

Video oral history interviews are useful when interviewing two narrators or showing aspects of a visually compelling topic (e.g., interviewing artists in their studio, around their artwork). For beginners, the challenges of video recording can outweigh the benefits. Video standards are constantly evolving; the files are large and many archives will not accept them or are particular when considering them; using the equipment requires more expertise and perhaps more helping hands; and the interview location will have many additional considerations (space, lighting, etc.). Adding a visual dimension may also negatively impact the comfort of the narrator and therefore the interview they provide. Unless you are very comfortable with video equipment or have access to a videographer, consider providing still photographs to accompany an audio interview instead.

# RESEARCH

Oral historians are historians first. Interview questions are informed by historical research, and interviewers are knowledgeable about the topic and subjects of an interview. If you are interviewing a civil servant, for example, learn all you can about the narrator's geographic region, her position, and the agency or office she served. Meet or call the narrator for an unrecorded conversation prior to the interview, so you can take note of any aspect of her experience that requires more research before the recorded interview.

# INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

It is tempting to provide interview questions in advance, so the recorded interview will seem polished and well-researched. Unfortunately this produces rote responses and dry-sounding interviews. During the pre-recording conversation you can instead provide the narrator with general interview topics. This will jog her memory and make her feel at ease without scripted answers.

Typical oral history interviews run between 45 and 120 minutes, so estimate bringing between 20 and 40 questions. These are not scripts; you will think “on your toes” as you ask follow-up questions and encourage her to provide more details.

## SUGGESTED TOPICS

### Biographical Details

- Where and when she was born
- Family details
- Upbringing and early education

### Interest in Government/Politics

- Mentors and inspiration
- Later education and training
- Early leadership roles
- Causes and passions

### Career or Service

- Offices or position
- Organizations and agencies
- Roles and responsibilities
- Milestones and significant moments
- Professional friendships and rivalries

### Reflections

- Lessons learned
- Legacy
- Comments on current events
- Advice for young women and leaders



The Loretto Community's Motherhouse is in Nerinx, Ky. The community of religious sisters (SL) and co-members (CoL) have a long tradition of teaching that includes educating the public and policy makers on issues of peace, justice, the environment, and healthcare as informed by their faith and the Gospel.

Pictured, top photo, from left: Ann White, SL, Karen Knoll, CoL, Sarah Concannon, SL. Bottom photo: Delores Kincaide, SL, Mary Jean Friel, CoL, Carolyn Jaramillo, CoL, Karen Knoll, CoL. *Photos courtesy of the Loretto Community Archives.*

# DURING THE INTERVIEW

## LOCATION AND TIME

The interview location should feel comfortable and safe for the interviewer and the narrator. A neutral, quiet place like a library study room is best; however travel and time limitations may dictate that the interview occur in an office or home setting. The need for power outlets, tables, and chairs often means that interviews take place in kitchens, the loudest room in a busy household.

You can't control every variable, but at least try to schedule a dedicated time for the interview. For example, it may seem convenient to interview family members during the holidays when you'll know they'll be in town. Unfortunately holidays are also noisy, hectic, and the schedule is tight. Make the interview its own occasion, and be honest with the narrator about how long the interview will take. From setting up the equipment to packing it away, plan at least two hours of uninterrupted time with your narrator.



Women representatives in the 2019 General Assembly. Pictured, from left, front row: Rep. Nancy Tate, Rep. Susan Westrom, Rep. Savannah Maddox, Rep. Nima Kulkarni, Rep. Attica Scott, Rep. Terri Branham Clark. Second row: Rep. Diane St. Onge, Rep. Maria Sorolis, Rep. Kim King, Rep. Ruth Ann Palumbo, Rep. Josie Raymond, Rep. Angie Hatton. Third row: Rep. Suzanne Miles, Rep. Kelly Flood, Rep. McKenzie Cantrell, Rep. Cherlynn Stevenson. Fourth row: Rep. Deanna Frazier, Rep. Patti Minter, Rep. Regina Huff, Rep. Tina Bojanowski. Row Five: Rep. Joni L. Jenkins, Rep. Melinda Gibbons, Rep. Kimberly Poore Moser, Rep. Mary Lou Marzian, Back row: Rep. Lisa Willner, Rep. Ashley Tackett Laferty, Rep. Kathy Hinkle.



## SOUND QUALITY

Using the best equipment you have access to, and with which you feel comfortable, is the first step in obtaining good sound quality in your interview. Training yourself to provide nonverbal feedback (e.g. nodding, facial expressions, eye contact) ensures that verbal affirmations like “uh huh” do not spoil the narrator’s words. Eliminating distracting environmental noises like radios, televisions, and ticking clocks will also improve the recording. Some interviewers even turn off HVAC systems or unplug refrigerators for the duration of the interview.

Microphones come in a variety of patterns that determine how much of the sound in a space will be recorded and in what direction. For example, an omnidirectional microphone will record in all directions, while a cardioid microphone only records a heart shaped space directly in front of, and to the sides of, the microphone. Know your microphone’s pattern for correct placement. Microphones will pick up the sound of direct contact and contact with an object touching it. For example, a microphone on a tabletop mic stand may record hand gestures made on the table. A physically expressive narrator may need to be placed strategically or coached about the microphone’s sensitivity.

## INTERVIEWING AND LISTENING

When you begin the recording after testing your sound, give an introduction that includes both of your names, your location, the date, this project, and the repository. Although interviewers are mostly silent during an interview, they are not passive. Good interviewers are listening intently, forming follow-up questions, reading body language, making discreet notes, and monitoring their equipment.

If you’re unsure where to begin, work like a playwright and encourage the narrator to set the stage. Ask her to describe a typical day in her office, during a campaign, or on the picket line. End at the designated time, when one of you becomes fatigued, or when her story reaches a natural break or conclusion.

### QUESTION AND LISTENING TIPS

- Ask a “softball question” like “What did you have for breakfast?” while testing your equipment. Asking the narrator a question she can’t get wrong will affirm her position as the expert on her experience.
- Ask open-ended questions that require more than a “yes” or “no” response to avoid a pattern of short answers.
- Ask one question at a time. Avoid multi-part questions that ask the narrator to recall or comment on several events or topics at once.
- Don’t fear silence. Allow the narrator time to formulate her answer and time to add more details at the end of her statement.
- Read the room. Certainly don’t ask controversial questions immediately, and respect that it may take several interactions or interviews before some topics can be addressed respectfully with the trust of the narrator.
- Ask quality-based and sensory follow-up questions like, “How?”, “In what way?”, or “Describe that for me?”.
- Save your opinions and do not dispute her information against the written record or your research.



# GLOSSARY OF TERMS

**Oral History Interview** - a recorded dialogue between two people that captures personal memories of historical significance.

**Repository** - an organization with facilities, staff, expertise, and equipment to store and care for archival material, including audio recordings.

**Legal Release Agreement** - an agreement between an interviewer and narrator that establishes the terms, use, ownership, archival responsibility, etc., for an oral history interview. Examples of legal release agreements include deeds of gift, waivers, and release forms.

**Redundancy** - the practice of storing digital archival materials in multiple places and in multiple ways, avoiding potential loss.

**Narrator** - the person being interviewed in an oral history recording. Narrators are also referred to as interviewees or informants.

**Recording media** - the object on which the interview is recorded, whether an analog medium like a cassette or VHS tape or digital medium like an SD card.

**File format** - the way in which a digital audio file is encoded and saved. Common audio file formats include WAV, AIFF, MP3, and PCM.

**Uncompressed audio format** - audio files recorded at the highest quality to capture the most sound information. As a result, uncompressed audio files have the best fidelity and the files sizes are quite large.

**External microphone** - a microphone attached to a recording device via cord and/or plug, as opposed to a microphone embedded within the recording device. External microphones are often better quality and can be moved to accommodate the recording space and the narrator's position.

**Metadata** - additional information about the interview, narrator, and setting that can be used by archivists and researchers.

# SUBMITTING INTERVIEWS TO THE KENTUCKY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## Accepted Media and Format Standards

At this time, the Kentucky Historical Society only accepts audio interviews. Interviews must be recorded using a digital, solid state recorder or a computer with audio recording software and an external microphone. The file format must be an **uncompressed .wav format, PCM 24bit, sampled at 96kHz.**

## Legal Release Agreement

The Kentucky Historical Society only accepts interviews accompanied by a legal release agreement signed by the narrator and the interviewer. Although a Kentucky Historical Society Deed of Gift is preferred (see [FORMS](#)), either the narrator or the interviewer may donate an interview accompanied by an alternative legal release agreement. The donor must then sign a Kentucky Historical Society Deed of Gift donor document.

## Metadata, Photos and Ephemera

Interviews must be accompanied by a complete interview information form (see [FORMS](#)). When submitting the interview, the donor may also include up to five small archival items, including digital photos, to provide context. If the narrator would like to donate artifacts, books, documents, or more archival items, please refer to the [Donate Your Treasures](#) page of our website (<https://history.ky.gov/get-involved/give/donate-your-treasures/>).

## Committee Review

All items donated to the Kentucky Historical Society are adjudicated by a collections committee comprised of curators, archivists, librarians, historians and oral historians. KHS reserves the right to decline any and all potential donations.

## Assistance

For questions, assistance, and more information about submitting oral history interviews to the Kentucky Historical Society, contact oral history administrator **Sarah M. Schmitt** at **502-782-8086** or **[SarahM.Schmitt@ky.gov](mailto:SarahM.Schmitt@ky.gov)**.



Emma Guy Cromwell (September 28, 1865 - July 19, 1952) was a suffragist, women's rights activist, and female Democratic Party politician in Kentucky. In 1896, she was chosen by the legislature to become the State Librarian. In 1923, Cromwell was elected Kentucky Secretary of State, making her the first woman elected to statewide office in Kentucky. She went on to be elected Kentucky State Treasurer in 1927, selected Kentucky State Park Director in 1932, and appointed State Librarian and Director of Archives in 1937. Cromwell owned the pictured Empire-style writing desk.



*Deed of Gift Agreement*

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (name of donor), hereby give to the Kentucky Historical Society and the Kentucky Oral History Commission, in form and content, the following recorded interview, recorded on \_\_\_\_\_ (date). I understand that Kentucky Historical Society will use my recorded interview for such educational purposes as they see fit and that by this conveyance I relinquish:

- All legal title and literary property rights, which I have or may be deemed to have in said work.
- All my rights, title, and interest in copyright which I have or may be deemed to have in said work and more particularly the exclusive rights of reproduction, distribution, and preparation of derivative works, public performances, and display.

This gift does not preclude any use that we ourselves may wish to make of the information in the recordings and/or subsequent transcripts of such.

This donation shall not be subject to restriction unless noted on the reverse of this document.

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Signature of interviewer*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Signature of narrator*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Date*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Date*

Address:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Address:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_



*Deed of Gift Agreement*

*Restrictions and Notes*

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### Interview Information Form

Date of Interview: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Interviewee information:

Last Name:	
First Name:	
Middle Name:	
Maiden Name:	
City, State of Residence:	
Email:	
Birth Date (MM/DD/YYYY):	
Place of Birth:	
Occupation:	
Mother's Name:	
Father's Name:	
Brief Bio.	

#### Interviewer information:

Last Name:	
First Name:	
Middle Name:	
Maiden Name:	
Address:	
City/State/Zip:	
Phone:	
Email:	

**Synopsis:** Describe the content of the interview in three to five sentences.

**Keywords:** List three or more topics discussed in the interview.

**Interview location** (for example, "interviewee's home"; address not necessary):

**File Name:**

**Length of interview** (in minutes):

**Proper Names:** Spell out any proper names (people, places, organizations, etc.) mentioned. Jot down names as they come up, but wait until the end of the interview to ask for correct spellings.

# COVER PHOTOS

Top Left: **Martha Layne Collins** (Dec. 7, 1936 – present), elected in 1983, is Kentucky's first and only woman governor and the sixth woman to hold the office of governor in the United States. Her legacy includes orchestrating the location of a Toyota manufacturing plant in Georgetown, Ky., and legislation benefiting workers injured through their occupation, especially coal miners with black lung disease. This campaign button is in the Kentucky Historical Society's artifact collection (1987.30.119).

Top Right: **Mae Street Kidd** (Feb. 8, 1904 – Oct. 20, 1999) served in the Kentucky House of Representatives from 1968 to 1984. She is known for sponsoring the bill to create the Kentucky Housing Corporation and leading the campaign for Kentucky to finally ratify the 13th, 14th, and 15th amendments in 1976. A Mae Street Kidd Oral History Collection is housed at the Kentucky Historical Society (1993OH03). *Photo in the public domain.*

Bottom Left: **Katherine Gudger Langley** (Feb. 14, 1888 – Aug. 15, 1948) became the first woman to serve Kentucky in the United State House of Representatives when she succeeded, through election, her husband who had been convicted of violating the Volstead Act. She was considered ostentatious by Washington society, and colleagues ridiculed her accent and speech. Nonetheless, she was a champion of education and became the first woman to serve on the Republican Committee on Committees. *Photo in the public domain, Library of Congress.*

Bottom Right: **Thelma Stovall** (April 1, 1919 – Feb. 4, 1994) served as a state representative, the state treasurer, Kentucky secretary of state, and lieutenant governor in her eventful public career. As an outspoken advocate for women's rights, Stovall is most remembered for exercising a seldom-used power of the lieutenant governor to act on behalf the governor while he or she was out of state. In 1978, she vetoed a repealed ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment while Gov. Julian Carroll was in South Carolina on vacation. This painting by Bill Petrie is in the Kentucky Historical Society's artifact collection (1999.9.1).

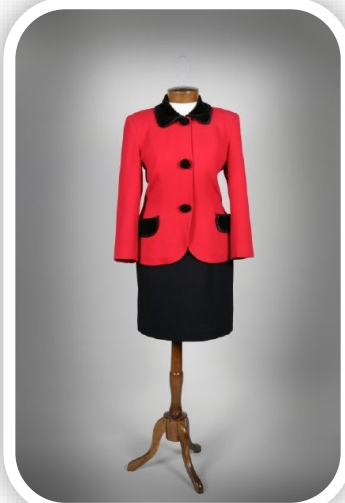
Unless otherwise noted, all photos in this field guide are from the Kentucky Historical Society's archival or artifact collections and can be accessed online.

## ARTIFACTS CATALOGUE

[history.ky.gov/resources/catalogs-research-tools/artifacts-catalog/](http://history.ky.gov/resources/catalogs-research-tools/artifacts-catalog/)

## DIGITAL COLLECTIONS

[kyhistory.com/cdm/](http://kyhistory.com/cdm/)



Elaine Chao wore this Albert Nipon suit at the official announcement of her appointment to United States Secretary of Labor on January 11, 2001, during the George W. Bush administration.

Kentucky Oral History Commission

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